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Chair: Ms. Mejía Vélez ..... (Colombia)

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 27: Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/71/38, A/71/209, A/71/219, A/71/223, A/71/306 and A/71/398)

1. **Mr. Mnisi** (Swaziland), speaking on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), said that the States members of the Southern African Development Community were committed to achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. To that end, SADC had adopted various strategies and plans, including a comprehensive protocol on gender and development, which was being reviewed to bring it into line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. While the protocol represented a significant step forward for the subregion, its implementation depended on an enabling institutional environment. SADC had developed data collection tools and a monitoring, evaluation and reporting matrix in order to assess progress made in implementing the protocol.

2. At the regional level, SADC was also committed to achieving Agenda 2063, of which gender equality was a significant focus, and had been involved in the development of the African Gender Scorecard. It was also at the initial stage of developing a regional multidimensional women's economic empowerment programme, as economic empowerment was essential for achieving gender equality.

3. Noting that Southern Africa had been severely affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic, he said that SADC had adopted a strategic framework on the issue and formulated a number of policies to combat the epidemic, including both medical interventions and initiatives aimed at changing people's behaviour. In addition, in recognition that socioeconomic conditions played a role in the epidemic, SADC had committed itself to raising awareness; widening access to care, testing and counselling; accelerating development; intensifying resource mobilization; and strengthening institutional, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Particular attention must be paid to addressing gender imbalances, the vulnerability of girls and harmful practices, as women accounted for the majority of HIV infections.

4. Despite some progress, gender inequality remained one of the biggest challenges facing Southern Africa, with lack of access to and ownership of resources, gender-based violence, trafficking and inadequate social investment sources of particular concern.

5. **Mr. Oña Garcés** (Ecuador) said that the concept of "buen vivir" or "sumac kawsay", an alternative development pathway, had come to guide the country's policies, including its commitment to ensuring gender equality and non-discrimination.

6. Over the previous nine years, women's political participation had increased. Women occupied key positions in the National Assembly, the Court of Justice and the Cabinet, where they held strategic portfolios such as justice and human rights, economic and social inclusion, development, health, urban development and housing, and planning. The Government had mainstreamed the issue of gender into national strategies; established a council on gender equality to support the development of policies and laws aimed at empowering women; and adopted a national agenda on women and gender equality, which included proposals for cross-cutting policies and affirmative action.

7. In addition, the National Assembly had passed laws specifically criminalizing femicide and giving unpaid domestic workers social security and pension rights. The Government was also tackling the issue of gender-based violence through legislative change, awareness-raising campaigns and the creation of shelters and specialized judicial units, with a view to improving women's access to justice and advancing their economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights. Such progress could not have been achieved without the efforts of women across Ecuador.

8. He welcomed the introduction of a stand-alone goal on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in the Sustainable Development Goals, as sustainable development could not be achieved by 2030 without ensuring their empowerment; real political will was needed in order to bring about radical change, however.

9. **Ms. Jayawardene** (Sri Lanka) said that over the previous three decades, the social and economic conditions of women in Sri Lanka had improved considerably: 97 per cent of Sri Lankan girls completed their primary education; female students

dominated in the fields of law, medicine, finance and teaching; access to health-care facilities for women had greatly improved; and the maternal mortality ratio had been halved since 1998.

10. To further promote the empowerment of women, the Government was focusing on three priority areas, the first of which was women's economic enhancement. Changing demographics meant that the country's economic development was increasingly dependent on female workers, including women living in rural areas, a group that the Government was trying to reach through rural development projects.

11. The second priority area was the elimination of violence against women. The Government had adopted a three-pronged approach of prevention, intervention and advocacy. It had also adopted a set of recommendations aimed at improving the structure of the bodies working to combat the issue, from the community level to the national level, and had taken steps to implement the joint United Nations programme on prevention of and response to gender-based violence in Sri Lanka.

12. The final priority area was women's engagement in political and public life. Recognizing the contribution that women could make as agents of reconciliation and peacebuilding, the Government had set up programmes across the country, some of them in collaboration with United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies, with a view to engaging women, particularly female-headed households, in the peacebuilding process.

13. **Mr. Ghedira** (Tunisia), speaking as a youth delegate, said that women had always played a central role in Tunisia. Noting the efforts of pioneering women in such fields as medicine and politics, stretching back as far as the ninth century B.C., he said that women were seen as essential drivers of the country's development and pillars of society because of the role they played in raising future generations. There was no contradiction between the freedom of women and Islam.

14. In 1956 a ground-breaking law had been passed that banned polygamy, formalized divorce and required the consent of both parties for marriage. Since then, the Government had continued to strengthen women's role in society. For instance, electoral lists had to include equal numbers of male and female candidates, and women accounted for 30 per cent of members of parliament. Although much remained to be done, particularly in terms of legislative change, young Tunisians were optimistic as the country had always been a leader in the field of gender equality.

15. **Ms. Goldrick** (Nicaragua) said that gender equality and the empowerment of women were essential for achieving sustainable development. Indeed, not only was there a stand-alone goal on gender equality and the empowerment of women in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, but it was also a cross-cutting theme for all of the Sustainable Development Goals.

16. While much progress had been made in terms of improving gender equality, boosting women's empowerment, reducing poverty and achieving the Millennium Development Goals, in particular in Latin America and the Caribbean, women still suffered from discrimination, especially women migrants, indigenous women, women living with disabilities or HIV/AIDS, women living in rural areas or conflict zones, and women living in countries under foreign occupation or economic sanctions.

17. Her Government's commitment to promoting gender equality and ensuring that women occupied prominent positions in the political, economic and social fields was enshrined in various laws. Its family law included a strategy aimed at combating violence against women through family counselling services, with a view to promoting dialogue and eradicating the cultural roots of gender-based violence. In 2012, Nicaragua had also passed a law stipulating that all electoral lists should include equal numbers of male and female candidates. That had been a turning point in the economic, political and social transformation of the situation of women as the law had dramatically increased the number of women in national and local government positions and had given them a voice in the decision-making process.

18. **Ms. Cornelissen** (Netherlands) said that she had interviewed two women farmers, one in the Netherlands and one in Nepal, whose experiences had highlighted the devastating impact that climate change — acknowledged as the world's greatest challenge with the adoption of landmark agreements such as the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris

Agreement — was having across the globe, particularly on women. A disproportionate number of women were responsible for putting food on the table, collecting water and fuel and looking after their families, and as a result women were the hardest hit by climate change.

19. At the same time, women were also underrepresented among the people with the means to tackle climate change, such as landowners, decision makers, entrepreneurs, bank managers and scientists. Stressing that women needed access to knowledge, political power, funding and corporate decision-making, she urged all countries to ensure that women could own land, inherit, get credit, start a business and receive an education, and to change the structures of political, corporate and academic power to ensure that women were included in decision-making processes.

20. **Ms. Abdulmaleki** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that, without a conducive internal and external environment, women's development and empowerment were unlikely to be achieved. In many places, disparities and exclusion remained high while extraordinary challenges, such as armed conflicts, had caused a substantive regression in women's progress in the affected areas. Women were particularly affected in the Middle East due to, inter alia, foreign intervention, military invasion and foreign occupation, combined with the upsurge of terrorism inspired by salafist and takfirist ideologies.

21. Despite impediments including unjust sanctions against their country, Iranian women continued to increase their role in society. The Government was determined to ensure a more central role for women in all spheres of life, particularly through promoting their participation in decision-making and the labour market by offering greater access to education, economic resources and employment opportunities, as well as making women equal beneficiaries of development.

22. In that regard, the President had directly intervened to suspend the national civil service recruitment exam in order to rectify gender quotas and ensure gender balance. Furthermore, the sixth national five-year development plan for the period from 2016 to 2020 included the goal of an annual 10 per cent increase in the number of women at high-level executive positions and called on all governmental organizations to apply a gender-sensitive approach to their planning, policies and programmes. Following the February 2016 parliamentary election the number of women parliamentarians had doubled, and, in order to enhance the promotion of human rights, the President had appointed a woman to oversee the progress of his proposed a citizen's rights charter through the legislature.

23. Moreover, the number of women entering higher education had exceeded the number of men, and improvements had been made in women's health indicators and health-related services. Rapid growth had also been recorded in social support programmes, including in the implementation of an empowerment plan for female-led households, the economic empowerment of women prisoners, the provision of extensive social support for female drug users, and the preparation of a national bill on the security of women and children in social interactions.

24. **Mr. Al-Hussaini** (Iraq) said that his country had enacted a number of laws to entrench the principle of gender equality and eliminate all gender-based discrimination. A number of national bodies to promote the interests and rights of women and children had been established, including the Parliamentary Committee for Women and Children, the Department of Community Policing, and the Children's Welfare Department of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. The principle of gender equality was enshrined in Iraq's Constitution and the county's laws, including the country's amended nationality law, which stipulated that Iraqi men and women enjoyed the same rights in terms of passing on their nationality to their children. Iraqi legislation also established a 25percent quota for the representation of women in the country's parliament and governorate councils and, since 2003, women had held many key positions in Iraqi society and politics, including ministerial posts, that had formerly been held exclusively by men.

25. Men and women in Iraq enjoyed equal access to education, including technical and vocational training. Iraq was, moreover, encouraging the use of co-education, revising the country's textbooks and educational curricula to facilitate their use in mixed-gender classes, and striving to eliminate all gender-based discrimination in the distribution of grants and scholarships.

26. Iraq was also making every effort to eliminate violence against women and, to that end, had

strengthened the powers of relevant law enforcement authorities. It would prove impossible, however, to achieve sustainable development for women without peace and security. In that regard, he drew attention to the horrific violence that continued to be perpetrated against thousands of Yazidi and other women in Iraq by the terrorist Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Those women were treated in the most brutal manner, trafficked as sex slaves and traded as if they were mere objects. It was vital that the international community provided all possible assistance to Iraq so that its Government could liberate those women and facilitate their rehabilitation and reintegration into society. In that connection, he commended the ongoing cooperation between his Government and the United Nations, and warmly welcomed the signing in September 2016 by the Iraqi Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, of a landmark agreement on the prevention of and response to conflict-related sexual violence in Iraq.

27. **Ms. García Gutierrez** (Costa Rica) said that, given the relationship between violence, discrimination and entrenched inequality, Costa Rica had endeavoured to create institutional means to prevent and punish all forms of violence against women and girls. Existing civil and criminal legislation covered, inter alia, domestic violence, commercial sexual exploitation and sexual harassment. Prevention policies, focusing on street violence, the treatment of women and symbolic violence, had also been launched. Moreover, significant advances had been made in implementing a comprehensive platform of support services for victims of violence.

28. Furthermore, providing women with the necessary instruments for their economic empowerment was crucial to enhancing their independence in other areas, as had been reaffirmed at the High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment in July 2016, co-chaired by the President of Costa Rica. Actions and programmes were also being launched to support entrepreneurial women and provide them with technical and economic support. In that regard, Costa Rica prioritized the implementation of a gender-based labour inspection programme to ensure that employers were fulfilling their commitments in such areas as equal pay.

29. Structural conditions continued to systematically limit the economic empowerment of women, including through unfavourable social and cultural norms, discriminatory laws, a lack of legal protection, and restricted access to financial, digital and property-related assets. It was clear that the cause of the gender gap was the division of work along gendered lines and in the lack of policies on joint social responsibility.

30. The State was responsible for challenging norms limiting women's access to the workplace or devaluing their work. Costa Rica had made significant progress in consolidating its institutional frameworks under its national policy for equality and gender equity. Its objectives were care as a social responsibility, employment and income, education and health, the effective protection of rights and eradication of violence, political participation, and the strengthening of institutions in favour of equality and gender equity. It also established strategies and public-private partnerships that would allow women full access to their rights.

31. **Ms. Kupradze** (Georgia) said that, among measures to promote gender equality, Georgia had improved its relevant legal framework and strengthened institutional mechanisms. The recently renewed action plan on the protection of human rights for the period from 2016 to 2017 contained separate chapters on gender equality, combating violence against women and domestic violence.

32. Furthermore, the national action plan on implementing Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), as well as the national action plan to combat violence against women, domestic violence and protection of victims and survivors, both covering the period from 2016 to 2017, had recently been approved as stand-alone documents. Seventeen legal acts had been revised in order to bring domestic legislation in line with the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.

33. Moreover, under the newly adopted amendments to Georgia's procedural legislation, court judgements could be revised on the grounds of decisions made by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. The law on gender equality and the code on local self-government had also been amended

to establish gender equality councils in local municipalities.

34. With the support of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the Government had undertaken measures to adjust the Sustainable Development Goals agenda and its targets to its national circumstances and to mainstream gender in compliance with globally approved indicators. A joint technical working group had been established to discuss nationalizing the Sustainable Development Goal targets.

35. Lastly, the urgent need to establish international monitoring mechanisms on the ground was clear in the occupied regions of Georgia, where women and girls continued to be deprived of, inter alia, their rights to freedom of movement and to education in the Georgian language.

36. **Ms. Popovici** (Republic of Moldova) said that, in April 2016, the Moldovan Parliament had adopted a law which provided that women and men must each constitute a minimum of 40 per cent of a political party's candidates and cabinet ministers. The law also banned sexist language and images in the media and advertising, established a gender equality coordination group in the central public administration and expanded the responsibilities of local public authorities on gender equality. Having been achieved through close collaboration with the United Nations country office, civil society and human rights activists, it was important for the law to become known to the Moldovan public and fully implemented nationwide, with the participation of the media and advertising companies.

37. In September, Moldova had become the first country in South-East Europe to introduce education on gender-responsive budgeting in national universities, which would improve the capacities, knowledge and professional abilities of public servants to include human rights and gender policies in budget planning. Inclusive or social budgeting was key to ensuring that gender policies and national commitments for women's empowerment, such as maternity or parental leave, wage distribution and pension allocations, were backed by adequate and sustainable funding.

38. Given unresolved conflict in the Transnistrian region, where the State authorities were not in control and foreign military troops and arsenals were illegally stationed, Moldova acknowledged the need to increase the role of women in mediation and conflict settlement. In March 2016, an Information and Dialogue Session on Women, Peace and Security was held in Moldova with the participation of governmental authorities, law enforcement agencies and international partners to expand discussions on the topic. Further information on regional and global good practices featuring the participation of women in security issues, particularly conflict resolution, would enable Moldova to ensure that its national defence agenda was inclusive and facilitated the contribution of women.

39. **Mr. Emvula** (Namibia) said that patriarchal attitudes and some traditional beliefs were among the causes of violence against women in Namibia. Due to the increased incidence of intimate partner violence, the judiciary had increased its prosecution and sentencing of offenders. Cases of passion killings, rape and domestic abuse continued to receive particular attention from law enforcement authorities and prosecutors in an effort to punish those responsible and assist the victims. Regional offices of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare had been undertaking advocacy work to empower women and girls, and identify and address abusive situations.

40. In 2016, the Ministry of Labour had increased the minimum wage for domestic workers, which would increase the economic independence of female domestic workers and enhance their ability to negotiate in their households. The Procurement Act had also been passed with the aim of improving the economic empowerment of all Namibians, particularly women and young people. Similarly, the small and medium enterprise policy, which was also launched in 2016, emphasized women's economic empowerment in order to increase equity in business and entrepreneurship.

41. Moreover, the First Lady of Namibia had recently been named a Special Advocate for Young Women and Adolescent Girls by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS in its continued campaign for an AIDS-free world. As one of the countries most affected by AIDS, the First Lady's campaign would bring much needed visibility to the issue and galvanize

efforts to combat the disease, which had a particular impact on women and girls.

42. **Ms. al-Kahtani** (Saudi Arabia) said that her country was making every effort to empower women and ensure that they fully enjoyed all their rights. Saudi women actively participated in different areas of public life, including as members of the Shura Council. They also enjoyed the right to vote and to stand as candidates in municipal elections. They were appointed to diplomatic positions abroad and represented Saudi Arabia in international conferences. Furthermore, six women had, recently been appointed to Saudi Arabia's national human rights commission.

43. The Saudi Arabian Government was making every effort to strengthen the role of women in society and had adopted numerous laws and rulings to that end. Saudi Arabia had also passed legislation that prohibited domestic violence against women and children and offered protections for victims. Furthermore, the country's National Transformation Programme 2020 aimed to increase women's participation in the civil service to 42 per cent by that date.

44. Islamic law prohibited the oppression of women and all forms of discrimination on the basis of race, gender or colour. A party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, her country would continue to uphold and strengthen respect for the human rights of women in line with the provisions of Islamic law, international norms, and — as provided by article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights — national security, public order and public morality considerations.

45. The Government and people of Saudi Arabia were deeply concerned that women in many parts of the world continued to suffer as victims of violence, exploitation and human trafficking. In particular, they were concerned that Palestinian women continued to suffer grave violations of their rights by Israeli occupation forces. Saudi Arabia urged the international community to take prompt and decisive action to end those criminal and inhumane practices and bring the perpetrators of those crimes to justice.

46. **Mr. Zulu** (Zambia) said that his Government continued to take measures to address discrimination against women. In addition to the 2011 Anti-Gender-Based Violence Act, the Government had decided to establish two user-friendly fast-track courts to improve delivery of justice in gender-based violence cases, thereby increasing access to justice for both victims and alleged perpetrators. In 2015, the Government had also enacted Gender Equity and Equality Act No. 22, which domesticated major international and regional instruments.

47. As part of its continuing review and strengthening of policy and legal frameworks, in 2015 the Government had examined its national child policy and its national gender policy to provide for the protection of women and girls and address emerging issues of child, early and forced marriage. In addition, gender perspectives were being mainstreamed in all sectors of the economy.

48. In 2016, in collaboration with the World Bank, Zambia had launched the Girl's Education and Women's Empowerment and Livelihood Project, which aimed to increase access to livelihood support for vulnerable women, as well as ensure access to secondary education for disadvantaged adolescent girls. The project was designed to reach thousands of women between age 19 and 64.

49. Furthermore, the Government had continued its economic empowerment of vulnerable groups, including women with disabilities. To that end, 1,400 women's clubs and associations had benefited from financial grants, while income generating activities and food security at a household level had been promoted. The Government was also providing collateral-free loans to individual women through its microcredit scheme, which aimed to promote entrepreneurial skills among rural women and thus far had benefited approximately 6,000 women across Zambia.

50. **Ms. al-Muraikhi** (Qatar) said that by including a specific goal on gender equality in the 2030 Agenda, the international community had underscored its determination to make progress in that crucial area, and had emphasized the pivotal role that gender equality and women's empowerment played in the achievement of the other Sustainable Development Goals, including those related to poverty eradication, education, health, food security, and the promotion of just, peaceful and inclusive societies. The international community was also determined to achieve gender equality at the highest level of the United Nations, as

clearly demonstrated by the fact that so many women had recently put forward their candidatures for the post of Secretary-General of the Organization. Qatar fully supported the achievement of that goal through its membership of the Group of Friends in favour of a Woman Candidate for Secretary-General of the United Nations.

51. Qatari women enjoyed all their rights under the country's Constitution, which provided that Qatari citizens were equal in terms of their public rights and duties and that all were equal before the law. The Constitution also prohibited discrimination on the basis of gender, race, language or religion. Furthermore, through its implementation of the Qatar National Vision 2030, her country was building a society in which women played a leading role in all areas of life, while the National Development Strategy 2011-2016 aimed, inter alia, to empower women to take up leadership positions through education, capacity building and skills development programmes.

52. Women's empowerment was closely linked to the consolidation of the rights and duties of the family. The National Development Strategy therefore contained a sector strategy on family cohesion and women's empowerment to bolster and support families by promoting an appropriate balance between family members' work and family obligations. As part of that strategy, Qatar was expanding the provision of childcare services, encouraging the adoption of more flexible and family-friendly working hours, raising awareness of how responsibilities should be shared among family members, and reviewing the country's maternity leave policy.

53. The Constitution of Qatar provided for free and compulsory primary and secondary education for all male and female citizens, and almost twice as many women as men in Qatar were enrolled in tertiary education. Qatar had also established a number of specialized bodies that sought to combat violence against women and offer protection to its victims, and her country was convinced that the eradication of violence against women could accelerate development and help create safer and more harmonious societies. Qatar remained deeply concerned about the increasing numbers of female migrants and refugees who fell victim to human traffickers, and she reiterated her country's strong condemnation of all forms of violence against women in situations of armed conflict.

54. **Ms. Yparraguirre** (Philippines) said that, to address violence against women and girls, her country had recently enacted a series of laws that provided additional protection for women and children from physical, sexual, psychological and economic abuse. The Inter-Agency Council on Violence against Women and their Children provided assistance to Government agencies in tackling cases of violence against women, with the help of guidebooks and assessment tools. Residential care facilities and rape crisis centres in different parts of the country had been established to provide protective services for the victims-survivors.

55. Furthermore, in 2015, the Commission on Human Rights had issued the Gender Ombud Guidelines under the Magna Carta of Women and related laws to examine implementation of the law, monitor compliance, issue advisories, investigate cases and recommend sanctions for violations. Quezon City had partnered with UN-Women on a study to collect information on violence against women and girls in public places, including sexual harassment on public transport.

56. As nearly ten million Filipinos, many of whom were women, had migrated overseas for work, the Government had established a comprehensive support mechanism through a dedicated framework of laws, regulations, policies, programs and institutions, which was implemented with a migrant-centred approach based on human rights. Pre-employment seminars for migrant workers targeted counselling programmes for groups considered at risk, while the efforts of immigration authorities to screen for potential victims of trafficking had been intensified.

57. Women and, increasingly, children, were disproportionately affected by trafficking. In cooperation with faith-based and non-governmental organizations, the Government recovery and reintegration programme for trafficked persons offered a comprehensive package of services for individual victim or survivors, their immediate family and the community, and included livelihood assistance, skills training, support for victims and witnesses, financial assistance, temporary shelters, and psychological counselling. The programme had served 5,096

trafficking victims nationwide, 74 per cent of whom were women, since 2013.

58. The Philippines had also enhanced cooperation between law enforcement authorities and prosecutors to build stronger cases against the perpetrators to ensure that justice was served. The number of convictions had increased six-fold during the period from 2011 to 2015, compared to the previous five-year period. Many of those convicted for trafficking crimes had been given the maximum punishment of life imprisonment.

59. **Ms. Konurbayeva** (Kazakhstan) said that it was necessary to link women's advancement and such pivotal issues as peace and security, human rights, sustainable development, poverty reduction and climate change mitigation. There was a need for global policy directives and long-term macro strategies, supported by official development assistance and North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation, to overcome inequities in education, employment, marriage, parenthood, reproductive health and political participation. Capacity building to ensure government accountability and the rule of law was essential, and must be accompanied by stricter monitoring and the use of gender statistics.

60. Kazakhstan had progressive gender-oriented policies and programmes, underpinned by the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Beijing Platform for Action, among other instruments. Through a joint technical support programme with United Nations agencies based in the region, her Government had strengthened efforts to eliminate violence against women and girls. It was focusing on ensuring women's political participation and economic empowerment with a view to reducing poverty, and improving access to education and jobs, which in turn would reduce the level of trafficking in women and girls. Kazakhstan had a literacy rate of 99.8 per cent and 55 per cent of all State public offices were held by women.

61. Kazakhstan had successfully implemented a 10-year national action plan on gender equality covering the period from 2006 to 2016 and was due to adopt a new national policy on family and gender in 2016. As a member of the Commission on the Status of Women, it would continue to contribute financially and politically with a view to achieving women's full equality and empowerment.

62. **Ms. Bernadel** (Haiti) said that progress had been made towards ensuring women's equal participation in education, professional training and decision-making processes at the national, regional and international levels. Her country's national ministry for women's rights was responsible for shaping and implementing equitable public policies for the promotion and protection of women's rights and the mainstreaming of gender-based analysis. Despite the challenges which remained, some progress had been made in the six areas prioritized by her Government since its adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action, which included education and training for women, literacy, and women and the economy.

63. Women's role in the Haitian economy was underestimated: women managed 25.3 per cent of family farms, for instance. Recent progress included an increase in the minimum wage which covered domestic workers, the majority of whom were women, and advances in health and family planning, with maternal mortality falling and more women aware of how to use modern forms of contraception. Following the 2010 earthquake, the Government had intervened to counter violence against women in displaced persons camps. In addition, it had taken structural measures to combat violence against women, such as establishing a unit dedicated to women's affairs within the national police force and improving its methods of generating and disseminating data on gender-based violence. Ten out of 28 ministerial positions in Haiti were occupied by women, and women led four of the country's political parties (comprising 10 per cent of party leaders). Awareness-raising and training on gender issues must be strengthened to ensure that women continued to acquire more rights. With political will, targeted actions, the necessary resources and social mobilization, equality was possible.

64. **Mr. Canay** (Turkey) said that his nation's commitment to improving the living standards of women and girls and ensuring that their rights were respected was demonstrated by the judicial reforms that the Government had been undertaking, as well as recent constitutional amendments that had introduced positive discrimination. Turkey continued to assist the United Nations in its efforts to achieve gender equality

and empower women. For example, it had supported the establishment of the UN-Women Europe and Central Asia Regional Office in Istanbul and had hosted the Global Conference on Ending Violence Against Women in December 2015.

65. Turkey had carried out extensive legislative and practical protection work to combat violence against women, and continued to contribute to relevant international normative and practical efforts. It had taken part in the drafting of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and was the first country to have ratified it. Its national action plan on combating violence against women was being renewed and updated for the period from 2016 to 2019. To date Turkey had established 46 violence prevention and monitoring centres, where women exposed to violence could seek help.

66. Women's advancement must be prioritized in all contexts, including crisis situations; it was therefore encouraging that women's and girls' empowerment had emerged as an overarching theme at the World Humanitarian Summit, held in May 2016. The advancement of women had guided his Government's humanitarian efforts in support of the 2.7 million Syrians who had fled their country. The Government granted the refugees temporary protected status and access to the national health system. More than 170,000 Syrian babies had been born in Turkish protection centres to date, and steps had been taken to ensure that the centres operated in a gender-sensitive manner. The international community should abide by the commitments it had made at the World Humanitarian Summit and in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants in order to provide the millions of displaced women and girls worldwide with the support they needed.

67. **Ms. Krisnamurthi** (Indonesia) said that poverty affected women more severely than men as a result of gender-based discrimination, which led to poor women having fewer opportunities. That in turn meant fewer resources, which could leave them vulnerable to violence and exploitation. Indonesia had incorporated the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including its gender-related targets, into its national frameworks. The President had made gender equality an institutional priority, and chosen three focus areas: increasing women's participation in decision-making processes; reducing maternal mortality and improving women's access to health services, including reproductive health services; and ending violence against women and girls. In support of the presidential commitment, in 2016 her Government had implemented a new programme designed to support the achievement of gender equality at the provincial, regency and community levels. The programme specifically addressed violence against women, human trafficking and barriers to economic justice. Activities under the programme included a protection scheme for witnesses and victims of violence, compulsory training for prospective migrant workers and training for women entrepreneurs.

68. **Mr. Bala** (Nigeria) reaffirmed his Government's commitment to implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. Nigeria had put into place policies to address the challenges hindering women's advancement, such as the Growing Girls and Women in Nigeria initiative, which linked budgetary processes to specific targets that would improve the lives and well-being of disadvantaged girls and women. To overcome the barriers faced by women in political and public life, the Government was supporting the offices responsible for women's political empowerment to identify, encourage and help women with the right credentials to run for political office. Its commitment was demonstrated by the appointment of highly qualified women to the cabinet of ministers. The gender units of all government ministries had been strengthened in order to effectively mainstream gender into all spheres of national life.

69. The Government had finalized plans for a cash transfer scheme and an enterprise programme, which would provide financial support to over a million women, artisans and agricultural workers. It had established social safety nets for approximately 25 million vulnerable citizens, including single mothers and survivors of gender-based violence. The Government had also established a programme to encourage men and women to be champions of gender equality and women's empowerment, and had intensified its campaign to encourage girls to study science subjects and enhance their knowledge of information technology in order to facilitate their future participation in national development. Lastly, a

law passed in 2015 on violence was contributing significantly to reducing violence against women.

70. **Ms. Lobo Juarez** (Honduras) said that the growth of rural economies was limited by gender-based barriers that blocked rural women's access to basic resources, such as credit. To empower women economically the Government had established a programme to give rural women access to credit and technical assistance. The programme would support productive economic activities and services with a view to improving the lives of individual women, their families and their communities.

71. Since discrimination at work was a root cause of poverty, forced child labour and social exclusion, the national congress had adopted a law mandating that women and men must receive equal pay for work of equal value. It was imperative for women and men to have the same opportunities and financial security, which was achieved by ensuring that both salaries and social security benefits were equal. Honduras remained committed to promoting women's economic autonomy, which was indispensable for their advancement.

72. **Mr. Mminele** (South Africa) said that the African Union had declared 2016 "African Year of Human Rights with Particular Focus on the Rights of Women"; it also marked the sixtieth anniversary of the protest in Pretoria against the extension of the pass laws in apartheid South Africa, in which 20,000 women from all walks of life had participated.

73. In March 2016 South Africa had submitted its fifth periodic report on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The report described the progress South Africa had made, which included the establishment of a gender-responsive budgeting framework designed to ensure that there was financing for women's empowerment at all levels of government. Challenges remained, however, despite the anti-discriminatory legislative and regulatory framework in place.

74. Forty-two per cent of Government employees were women, which demonstrated his country's commitment to achieving gender parity in public life. South Africa ranked third in the world in terms of women's parliamentary representation, with women accounting for 52 per cent of chairpersons of parliamentary committees. South Africa continued to implement the 2030 Agenda in coordination with its own national development plan, which urged all citizens to work towards the advancement of women and girls.

75. **Ms. Soulama** (Burkina Faso) said that women contributed significantly to economies when they benefitted from equal economic, political and civil rights. Burkina Faso had made noteworthy legislative, institutional, political and socioeconomic progress on women's advancement since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Plan of Action. Conscious of the fact that inequalities would hinder the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, her Government had undertaken a number of reforms, resulting in policies and strategies that promoted and protected women's rights.

76. Specifically, her Government had taken various actions to address violence against women and to promote gender equality and women's entrepreneurship. Among the initiatives were a programme to combat violence against women and girls, which included awareness-raising and training activities; a 2015 law on violence against women and girls, which focused on prevention and reparations; the establishment of a 30 per cent quota for women on lists of candidates in legislative and municipal elections; and the adoption of a law designed to strengthen rural women's access to land.

77. In addition, the Government had adopted a national strategy on accelerating girls' education and established a national literacy programme. Maternal mortality had fallen and would continue to do so as a result of measures taken in 2016 to ensure that pregnant women had access to free care. A strategy to promote women's entrepreneurship had been adopted and a directorate for women's economic empowerment had been established. In the light of the many challenges that remained, the Government had adopted gender as a guiding principle in relation to its national economic and social development plan, and intended to strengthen women's representation in political life through the application of its quota law. Sustainable development was not possible without the effective participation of autonomous women with the same political, civil and economic rights as men.

78. **Ms. Baomar** (Oman) said that men and women in her country enjoyed the same rights and freedoms, and that Omani women enjoyed greater freedoms and more robust legal safeguards than in other States in the region. More than 50 per cent of girls in Oman attended school and women comprised 55 per cent of students at Oman's universities. The number of women in the workforce was also increasing steadily, and, in 2012, women had comprised 43 per cent of the civil service and 20.3 per cent of the private sector workforce. Women had held ministerial, ambassadorial and other senior positions in Government and the civil service, and leadership positions in Oman's public and private sector economies. Women had also been appointed to the judiciary and had risen to high-ranking posts in the country's police and armed forces.

79. Omani women also enjoyed the right to vote and to stand as candidates in municipal elections and in elections to the two houses of the Omani parliament. Women and men received the same salaries and enjoyed the same rights when applying to the Government for residential land. Omani women were also protected under the law from dismissal if they became pregnant or fell ill, and they were entitled to 50 days of paid maternity leave and could take up to one additional year of unpaid leave when they had a child.

80. In 2015, Oman had informed the Human Rights Council that it intended to withdraw its reservation to article 15, paragraph 4 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and was amending its passports law so that women could obtain passports and travel without first obtaining the permission of a male guardian. Oman believed that protecting and empowering women also strengthened the family and society, and would continue to ensure that that goal remained a priority in all Omani policies and programmes.

81. **Ms. Karabaeva** (Kyrgyzstan) said that the advancement of women could be achieved most effectively by facilitating economic independence and political participation, and by increasing girls' access to secondary and higher education through measures including the construction of schools in rural areas. Kyrgyzstan had made advances in supporting women's leadership in parliament, the government, the judiciary and elsewhere.

82. Migrant exploitation and human trafficking were exacerbated by increasingly exclusionary immigration policies criminalizing irregular migrants, a lack of sufficient channels for regular migration and family reunification, and the exclusion of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants from employment. To prevent the vulnerable, and particularly women and girls, falling prey to trafficking, measures were needed that addressed poverty, unemployment, access to education, unsafe migration, and gender-based discrimination.

83. **Ms. Sukkar** (Jordan) said that article 6 of her country's Constitution stipulated that all Jordanians should be equal before the law and that there should be no discrimination among them in terms of their rights and duties. Her country was striving to increase the number of women in decision-making positions and achieve equality of opportunity between men and women. In the parliamentary elections held in September 2016, women had increased their share of seats in the lower house of parliament from 12 to 15.4 per cent, and ten women had been appointed to the 65-seat upper house. There were also 176 female judges in Jordan, who comprised more than 18 per cent of the judiciary.

84. Jordan's 2013-2017 National Strategy for Women had adopted a participatory approach that brought together all relevant Governmental and civil society stakeholders with a view to empowering women in the social, economic, political and cultural fields, and accelerating the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 5. Jordan believed, moreover, that women must be involved as full partners in all initiatives to promote inclusive development and address the country's social and economic challenges, and was therefore amending the labour and social security laws to promote women's participation in the labour market.

85. Violence against women occurred in every country in the world and was one of the most widespread violations of human rights at the global level. In response to the new forms of violence and the massive migration flows taking place throughout the region, which were causing significant demographic, social and cultural changes, Jordan had formulated a draft that would provide legal protections for the victims of family violence. That draft law would be submitted to parliament for adoption in the near future.

Jordan hosted 1.4 million Syrian refugees, 51 per cent of whom were women and girls, and was striving to ensure their safety and provide them with high quality services in accordance with relevant Security Council resolutions and international instruments. Jordan was also working with relevant United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations in the country to raise awareness of health issues, including reproductive health, among Syrian refugee women and girls and, in collaboration with the Jordanian Police Family Protection Department, was holding training courses for non-governmental organization staff in refugee camps on how they should interact with women and girls who had been subjected to violence. Jordan was also concerned about the situation of Palestinian women living under Israeli occupation, including restrictions placed on their movement and violations of their rights to safety and security.

86. **Ms. Vieira** (Cabo Verde) said that gender parity had essentially been achieved in her country at all levels of education and literacy, with work underway on improved family planning, better access to reproductive health care, and assured reproductive rights. Regulatory frameworks were in development to promote and protect women's human rights, and to eliminate all forms of violence and discrimination against women. The country had implemented national plans promoting equal rights, obligations and opportunities for men and women.

87. Much work was still needed for effective implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women. Her delegation called for increased efforts to promote the political participation and leadership of women and ensure their broader representation in decision-making positions.

88. **Ms. Nandi** (Myanmar) said that her country had taken the necessary measures to eliminate discrimination against women and girls and promote their basic rights. Following the review of its report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in June 2016, Myanmar would form a working group to implement the recommendations in the Committee's concluding observations and report on its progress within two years.

89. A National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women (2013-2022) had been adopted in October 2013 to ensure gender equality for women, in addition to the equal rights granted to all by the State Constitution of Myanmar. Recent efforts had increased the participation of women in government and politics to its highest level, with over half of all government employees female.

90. Myanmar was a signatory to the Declaration of Commitment to end Sexual Violence in Conflict, and a domestic Anti-violence against Women law was in the final stage of drafting. At the regional level, the Government was collaborating with members of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights to implement the 2015ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence against Women.

91. **Ms. Guzmán Madera** (Dominican Republic) said that continued implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action was crucial to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and gender equality. The Dominican Republic had adopted policies encouraging cooperation between all government bodies to address the main gender disparities faced by women.

92. The Government had employed various measures to raise awareness among victims of gender violence, and had devised a femicide investigation protocol to establish procedures for optimizing capacities and standardizing scientific femicide investigation techniques.

93. Many poor and marginalized adolescents still experienced discrimination and exclusion from services such as education and health care, putting them at greater risk of exploitation, abuse and violence. Further coordinated efforts were needed to combat child marriage, female genital mutilation and other harmful practices, and the Government had introduced measures to reduce teen pregnancy rates.

94. **Mr. Rasuli** (Afghanistan) said that Afghan women and girls had experienced significant improvements in their political, social, economic and cultural rights since the fall of the Taliban. Women had equal voting rights, as well as significant representation in political decision-making with an allocation of 17 per cent and 26 per cent of seats in the upper and lower parliamentary houses, respectively. Women's access to education had improved markedly since 2001. The proportion of female students in

primary and secondary schools had risen from almost zero to 40 per cent, with a considerable increase at third level also.

95. Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals, which was dependent on economic, political and security factors, should be imminent in Afghanistan. The Government would invest around $250 million in its National Priority Program, which focused in part on women's economic empowerment as a means of achieving those goals. The National Action Plan to implement Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security would increase the number of women in the security forces by 20 per cent.

96. **Ms. Hadju** (Canada) said that Canada had underscored its international commitment to gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at the recent session of the Commission on the Status of Women, seeking out membership for the 2017 to 2021 term. As Minister of Status of Women, she had engaged key stakeholders across the country to develop a Federal Strategy Against Gender-based Violence. The Government was also addressing the much higher rate of violence faced by indigenous women and girls in Canada, and had launched a National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

97. Canada was developing a Framework for Early Education and Childcare to ensure broader access to childcare as a means of promoting gender equality, and a Poverty Reduction Strategy to tackle persistent income disparities. A plan was in place to increase gender-based analysis in federal decisions on policies, programmes and legislation, and a new transparent appointment process would promote diversity in senior government positions.

98. **Ms. Zewdie** (Ethiopia) said that her country had implemented a number of policies, legal frameworks and administrative measures supporting the advancement of women. The proportion of women in parliament had risen from 2.75 per cent in 1995 to 38.8 per cent in 2015, and had reached over 40 per cent in regional councils and 50 per cent in local councils. In courts of first instance, 41 per cent of judges were women. Half of all job openings created via the Government's Urban Development Package had been reserved for women to promote equal access to earning opportunities, and, to increase home ownership among women, 30 per cent of new public housing units were reserved for women.

99. In education, the rate of school participation by girls had reached a gender parity index (GPI) of 94 per cent at primary level, 47 per cent at secondary, 32 per cent at undergraduate and 20 per cent at postgraduate. The GPI for technical and vocational training was 51 per cent. With regard to health care, the country's Health Extension Program had deployed over 41,000 health extension workers nationwide, 98 per cent of whom were women.

100. **Ms. Singh** (Australia) said that the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022 sought to reduce levels of violence against women through cooperation between government, community and civil society, while the complementary Women's Safety Package provided practical and immediate action to keep women and children safe and support victims of violence. The dual approach was needed as prevention took time to deliver tangible results, and awareness-raising could increase demand for support services by making people aware of the help available.

101. Australia was partnering with Pacific neighbours to address the underlying causes of gender violence, and was helping local women's rights organisations to work with governments on drafting by-laws to eliminate a number of harmful practices such as polygamy, bride price and the murder of women accused of sorcery. The country was also providing an additional $6 million to the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women, and would promote gender equality and women's empowerment through its aid programme.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.